SCIENCE & GOVERNMENT REPORT

11th Year of Publication

The Independent Bulletin of Science Policy

Volume XI, No. 8 | P.O. Box 6226A, Washington, D.C. 20015 | May 1, 1981

NSF Board Caves in on Reagan Budget Cuts

The National Science Board—by law, the policy-making body of the National Science Foundation—has passively acquiesced to the Reagan-Stockman mangling of the NSF budget.

The cop-out came in a tepid, frequently tortuous statement, issued April 8, in which the 24-member Board ran up the white flag by stating: "The Board recognizes the emergency nature of the economic situation and the vigorous remedies the President seeks in the way of Federal expenditure reductions in non-military areas." Then comes a statement that just simply isn't true: "The emergency precluded the normal process of discussion of program priorities in which the Board could participate meaningfully."

As a matter of fact, the Board assembled for routine meetings January 15-16, February 19-20, and March 19-20—a two-month period during which Washington oozed with leaks about the new Administration's budget-cutting intentions.

What's evident, of course, is that Reagan and company didn't care to take the Board into their confidence, but that didn't mean the Board—composed of private citizens plus the Director of NSF, ex-officio—had to sit idly while NSF programs and budgets were rewritten.

The Board, chaired by Lewis Branscomb, a Vice President and Chief Scientist of IBM, acknowledges its abnegation of statutory responsibility by stating: "It is the National Science Board's statutory responsibility to assist the President by establishing policies and priorities, and by guiding the activities of the Foundation to ensure that with the available resources NSF fulfills the functions defined by Congress and the goals established by the President. . ."

The Board then goes into a moderately worded plea for what it really has in mind—the right to allocate whatever amounts the President and the Congress make available to the Foundation. The immediate reason for requesting this is, of course, the Reagan Administration's slashing of NSF's social and behavioral science programs, plus the elimination of the Foundation's activities in science education.

"The Foundation has," says the statement, "within its appropriation authority, limited capability to reprogram funds to take advantage of emerging research

(Continued on page 2)

"A Groveling Statement"

"It's a groveling statement."

That's the opinion of the National Science Board budget-cut statement that was volunteered to SGR last week by John Wilson, retired President of the University of Chicago and former Deputy Director of the National Science Foundation.

Wilson, who spent most of his career at NSF, scoffed at the Board's contention that "The emergency precluded the normal process of discussion. . ."

Under the far more difficult crisis of McCarthyism, he said, the National Science Board stood up for the interests of the scientific community.

An indirect criticism of the Board has been issued by Rep. George E. Brown Jr. (D-Calif.), former chairman, and still a member, of NSF's legislative authorization subcommittee. In a public letter dated April 3, Brown stated:

"As an active participant in the Congressional actions regarding the National Science Foundation's budget for many years and as the ranking Democrat

(Continued on page 2)

In Brief

The Austria-based International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), a product of that long-ago Nixon-Brezhnev detente, has had its first publicly revealed security flap. Following published accusations of illicit activity, outside of IIASA, Arkady Belozerov, Secretary of the organization since 1979, has resigned. IIASA coyly announced that he's "denied the charges and the Institute has no way of independently determining their truth."

Meanwhile, apart from that crisis, IIASA has apparently succeeded in obtaining a reversal of OMB Stockman's initial plan to cut off the annual US contribution to the organization.

Rumors are ringing around the National Academy of Sciences that a staff bloodletting will occur after Frank Press succeeds the retiring Philip Handler as President next July 1. In fact, Press has already dismissed—effective that date—one senior staffer, W. Murray Todd, Executive Director of the NAS Commission on International Relations. Todd's been with the Academy for 19 years.

NSF Finds Simplified Funding Rules Work

Probably with some incredulity, Washington's bookkeepers are studying the results of an administrative experiment that suggests that university researchers are not inclined to larceny.

The experiment, conducted by the Association of American Universities and the National Science Foundation, was designed to address university complaints that federal accounting procedures, particularly the infamous Circular A-21 of the Office of Management and Budget, are inappropriate to academic institutions and are burdening scientists and campus administrators with too much red tape and paperwork.

During the first phase of the experiment, which began in 1979, chemistry departments at nine universities were given the authority to make routine budgetary decisions concerning NSF grants without the Foundation's prior approval. The campuses were required to consult with NSF only when a new principal investigator was to be named to a project or when there were to be major changes in the scope of the research. Such matters as purchase of new laboratory equipment, whether to send researchers to a conference overseas, how many researchers to hire for a project and when were left to the department and the university. So impressed has NSF been with the initial results of the experiment that the Foundation has announced that it will expand the project to include all research departments at 12 universities.

Although there were some problems in the first phase of the experiment, NSF officials say the difficulties are not the fault of the universities. There is "every reason to believe," says Robert D. Newton, Senior Staff Associate in NSF's Division of Grants and Contracts, that the second phase of the experiment will be just as successful as the first. The officials in the Foundation who have worked on the project stop short of saying it will be adopted for use by all universities that receive NSF funds, but there are indications that, if the second phase of the experiment is successful, the new accounting system may be made available to many, if not all, of the universities receiving NSF research funds.

The major problem with the first phase of the experiment was the so-called master-grant concept, which allowed universities to spend funds designated for one project on other NSF projects within the participating chemistry departments. To their surprise, many campus administrators found that master grants were just as arbitrary and unwieldy as the normal federal procedure of restricting funds to their original purpose. Because the master-grant idea also caused paperwork headaches for the Foundation, officials decided to abandon the procedure. Instead, NSF will allow researchers at the participating universities who are working on similar or related projects to pool their funds upon agreement of the principal investigators of each project.

University administrators seem to be happy with the compromise. For example, Allen J. Sinisgalli, Director of Research Administration at Princeton University, declined to participate in one phase of the experiment because the master-grant provisions seemed "cumbersome and artificial." He says he is eagerly joining in the second round.

(Continued on page 3)

BROWN'S RESPONSE

(Continued from page 1)

on the Science, Research and Technology Subcommittee of the House Science and Technology Committee, I see no justification for the directed cuts in science and engineering education, social and behavioral research, instrumentation or cross-directorate activities. The manner in which these directed cuts were made violates the legal intent of the National Science Foundation's Organic Act, which established a National Science Board to help set priorities, by ignoring the advice of the administrators of the Foundation on where cuts should occur if they must occur. The irony is that the proposals for cuts in the National Science Foundation budget would eliminate funding for the very type of economic research that the Reagan economic plan is supposedly based on.

"It seems apparent to me that ideological motivations have been paramount. I can think of no other explanation for the recommendation of the Reagan Administration to terminate the social and behavioral science research and science education programs in the National Science Foundation. While I will strongly oppose each of these terminations, I think it is incumbent upon all of us in the Congress to avoid concurrence with ideological biases in the guise of budgetary decisions."

SCIENCE BOARD

(Continued from page 1)

opportunities and to make some adjustments that deal with specific issues. The Board believes, however, that the Foundation needs some additional flexibility to support opportunities in the behavioral and social sciences, science and engineering education, and international science activities. . .Within the overall Presidential budget request, the Foundation will seek the appropriate authority from the Congress for these purposes."—DSG

. . .But GAO Auditors Have Some Reservations

(Continued from page 2)

The advantage of the new process is that it cuts down on the long delays that normally characterize negotiations with the government, says Newton Catell, AAU's Director of Federal Relations. While universities are heralding the experiment as a much-needed improvement in the strained relations between the campuses and the government, some federal officials are still wary of the arrangement. Several NSF program directors, for example, say privately that they are reluctant to turn over so much control to the universities—even to those with a reputation for compliance. The reasons NSF officials give for their concern are vague, although most agree that they are simply unaccustomed to doing business in such a *laissez faire* manner.

Concerned that NSF may be too free-wheeling with university grants, the General Accounting Office (GAO) has begun an investigation into each of the nine universities involved in the original project. At least one of the investigations, at Columbia University, has stopped NSF from signing a final agreement with campus officials. Although officials at both the Foundation and the GAO have declined to comment on the situation, sources say privately that GAO auditors are far more concerned about Columbia's or any other university's ability to participate in the project than is NSF. Sometime this month, GAO is expected to release some of the preliminary results of its investigation to Congress, but the full details of its report are not expected to be published until this fall.

In the meantime, NSF expects to have made final commitments to all 12 universities. So far, it has signed agreements with seven of the nine universities that participated in the first part of the experiment. They are: the California Institute of Technology, the University of California at Los Angeles, the University of California at San Diego, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the State University of New York at Stony Brook, and the University of Florida.

First-time agreements have been signed with Princeton, Stanford, and Yale universities. And agreements are pending with the University of Wisconsin at Madison, as well as Columbia, both of which participated in the first phase of the project.

Even if all 12 universities carry out the experiment successfully, the one question that they or NSF will will be unable to answer is whether or not the accounting system would work if it were institutionalized at all universities. In an experimental situation where there is a great deal of close scrutiny, most people are bound to be on their toes. What is not yet clear is whether universities have the accounting expertise to handle millions of federal taxpayers' dollars without government policing.—AR

Diane Fink Quits NCI

Diane J. Fink has resigned as Associate Director of the National Cancer Institute and will join the American Cancer Society June 15 as Vice President for Service and Rehabilitation. She joined NCI in 1971, following graduation from Stanford Medical School.

House Issues Innovation Reports

Texts of two sets of Congressional inquiries on innovation and productivity are available without charge from the House Subcommittee on Science, Research, and Technology. *H.R. 6910: The National Technology Foundation Act of 1980, No. 179,* derives from five days of hearings held by the Subcommittee last September; *Small High Technology Firms and Innovation, No. 167,* comprises a report and hearings held in 1979 and 1980.

Soon to be issued is a report by the Congressional Research Service, *Analysis of Hearings on HY 6910—The National Technology Foundation Act of 1980.* (The Act, incidentally, was introduced as a device to nudge the National Science Foundation to pay more attention to applied research and engineering; though it never went far in the legislative mill, NSF shortly afterwards reorganized itself toward that goal.)

Copies of the publications may be obtained by sending a self-addressed mailing label to: Publications Office, Committee on Science and Technology, US House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515.

©Science & Government Report, Inc., 1981

ISSN 0048-9581

Editor and Publisher
Daniel S. Greenberg

Associate Publisher
Wanda J. Reif

Contributing Correspondents
Anne Roark, Clive Cookson (Washington); Michael Kenward (London); Francois Seguier (Paris)

Independently published by *Science & Government Report,* Inc., twice monthly, except once each in January, July and August. Annual Subscription: Institutions, $118.50 (two years, $198.50); individuals, $48.50 (two years, $82.50). Editorial offices at 3736 Kanawha St., N.W., Washington, DC 20015. Tel. (202) 244-4135. Second class postage paid at Washington, DC. Please address all subscription correspondence to Box 6226A, Northwest Station, Washington, DC 20015. Reproduction without permission is prohibited. SGR is available on Xerox University Microfilms. Claims for missing back issues will be filled without charge if made within six months of publication date.

OMB Gives Full Details on R&D Budget Shifts

After uncountable rounds of revisions of revisions, the Office Management and Budget has finally produced the official version of President Reagan's budget plans for research and development. Presented here are the overall outlays for R&D and for basic research. On both charts, the 1980 figure tells what was actually spent in that fiscal year. Under 1981, the first column shows what Mr. Carter proposed spending in the present fiscal year (which ends on September 30, 1981). The "Reagan Revisions" indicates the changes that the new President proposed in March. The columns under 1982 show the amounts that Mr. Carter proposed for Fiscal 1982 (which begins next October 1) just before he left office. The next column shows the revisions that Mr. Reagan has proposed.

Conduct of Research and Development

(In millions of dollars)

		1981			1982		
	1980 Actual	Carter Budget	Reagan Revisions	Change	Carter Budget	Reagan Revisions	Change
DoD	13,451	15,874	15,587	-287	18,925	19,596	+671
NASA	4,711	5,130	5,118	-12	6,207	5,742	-465
Energy	4,698	4,887	5,003	+116	5,411	4,858	-553
HHS	3,517	3,676	3,644	-32	3,964	3,938	-26
(NIH)	(2,954)	(3,163)	(3.138)	(-25)	(3,397)	(3,392)	(- 5)
NSF	831	924	896	-28	1,021	904	-117
Agriculture	659	754	748	-6	854	843	-11
Interior	417	428	421	-7	449	399	-50
Transportation	377	387	380	-7	424	354	-70
Commerce	357	375	359	-16	405	327	-78
EPA	385	343	344	+1	347	327	-20
Labor	139	266	214	-53	306	103	-203
NRC	179	208	208	—	223	223	—
AID	106	117	117	—	134	120	-14
VA	132	140	138	-2	155	146	-9
Education	121	139	136	-2	143	110	-33
All other	272	291	274	-17	323	283	-40
Total, Conduct of R&D	30,351	33,937	33,584	-353	39,289	38,271	-1,018

Conduct of Basic Research

(In millions of dollars)

HHS	1,657	1,742	1,730	-12	1,911	1,904	-7
(NIH)	(1,530)	(1,641)	(1,629)	(-11)	(1,795)	(1,786)	(-9)
NSF	773	848	839	-10	940	853	-87
Energy	526	586	589	+3	709	680	-29
Defense	476	540	583	+42	632	686	+54
NASA	519	526	515	-11	614	574	-40
Agriculture	259	309	306	-3	362	357	-5
Interior	71	76	74	-2	90	79	-11
Smithsonian Institution	39	43	43	—	50	50	—
Commerce	32	35	35	—	41	38	-3
Education	18	20	20	—	23	16	-7
VA	15	16	15	-1	18	15	-3
Transportation	—	6	1	-5	12	—	-12
EPA	14	16	16	—	14	14	—
All other	22	22	19	-2	28	18	-10
Total	4,419	4,785	4,785	—	5,444	5,284	-160

Campus Chiefs Protest DoD Security Rules

Federal officials in Washington have reacted with some bemusement to a strongly worded letter from the presidents of five major research universities complaining of growing attempts to impose export control regulations on the conduct of university research in potentially sensitive areas, such as computer research involving very-high-speed integrated circuits (VHSIC).

The presidents' letter was sent at the end of February to Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, Secretary of State Alexander Haig, and Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldridge, these being the heads of the agencies responsible for implementing the export control regulations. The authors of the letter claim that the rigid application of such controls to university research, on the grounds that discussing scientific results with a foreign scientist technically constitutes an "export" of technical data, raises "serious legal and constitutional problems." One of the major difficulties, however, is that agency officials often seem as unclear about how the regulations are meant to apply to universities as the universities do themselves; and the type of clarification that the scientists are demanding to remove the uncertainty within which they must now operate is therefore unlikely to be fast in coming.

The new enthusiasm for applying export controls, principally the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) and the Export Administration Regulations (EAR), comes from two related sources. The first is a growing fear that Eastern bloc countries may be surreptitiously using illicit access to technical information from the West on, for example, microcomputer chips to make up for their current lag in such fields. It is reported that the Soviet Union, for example, currently has about 30 agents in Silicon Valley in California responsible for obtaining data on microelectronics technology, with others in Phoenix and Dallas. Some observers point out that these efforts have increased considerably since President Carter imposed restrictions on the export of high-technology equipment to the USSR after the Afghanistan invasion.

The other source is an awareness that technical know-how can be as commercially important as technical hardware—a fact implicitly recognized by Mr. Carter's Domestic Policy Review on Industrial Innovation. This has resulted in demands for the raising of protective barriers around technical fields with a high potential commercial value. And the federal government's increasing interest in "goal-oriented basic research," particularly sponsored by the Defense Department, has merely broadened the grey area where academic research may fall into the sensitive category.

So far, principal concerns have been generated by instructions from Congress that the Department of Defense's new VHSIC research program should be carried out under the ITAR regulations. No one is sure of the precise origins of this requirement, since it appeared in a congressional conference report on the DoD legislative authorizations when the VHSIC program was initiated, but apparently did not originate with either the House or the Senate committees. Last December, the Defense Department sent out a memorandum describing how it intended to interpret the ITAR regulations for VHSIC research, stating that in view of the uncertainties involved in locating the barrier between that research to which the export control regulations did or did not apply, it would "prefer" that universities did not use foreign research workers on such projects.

This memorandum was the principal stimulus for the letter of complaint, which was sent by Donald Kennedy, President of Stanford University and co-signed by Presidents Marvin L. Goldberger, California Institute of Technology; Paul E. Grey, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Frank H.T. Rhodes, Cornell University, and David S. Saxon, University of California. They suggest that because some of the legal and constitutional questions raised by the regulations may involve the First Amendment, "it might be mutually advantageous for DoD to continue (selectively and sparingly) to rely on its classified research facilities

(Continued on page 6)

AAAS Sets Up Security Study

While the Defense Department is suggesting that academe is over-reacting to its security concerns, there's a sure sign that the mandarins of science are indeed troubled about the Pentagon's apparent intrusions on campus labs. And that's to be found in the reaction of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, an institution noted more for deliberation than speed.

In this case, however, the AAAS' Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility decided on April 18 to establish a group tentatively titled the Subcommittee on National Security and Scientific Communication. Appointments haven't been finally made, but it's expected that the subcommittee will be chaired by Stephen Unger, Professor of Computer Science, Columbia University. Other likely members are: Kenneth Boulding, former AAAS President; Esther Hopkins, Polaroid Corp.; Jessica Mathews, Washington Post; Elena Nightingale, Institute of Medicine, and Victor Weisskopf, MIT.

. . .Weinberger Promises Reconsideration

(Continued from page 5)
to carry out the most sensitive segments of the VHSIC program." The letter points out that this has been the practice of the Department in previous years, and is "far preferable" to the applications of these "restrictive and virtually unenforceable regulations" to universities.

"For those university activities which remain unclassified, we urge the government to cease all attempts to apply the restrictions until the broader issues are resolved," the university heads stated.

The university presidents make it clear that their concerns are much broader than the specific difficulties raised by the VHSIC program. They also complain about "attempts to restrict publication of unclassified university research results arising from DoD-sponsored projects," a reference to the Department's inclusion in some research contracts of the provision that, even though the research sponsored is unclassified, permission from the supporting agency is required before the results can be published in the open literature. The letter also refers to a Department of Commerce mandate to at least one university barring certain foreign researchers from that university's sponsored research activities due to their citizenship. This is thought to refer to experiences at Cornell University, site of a major research facility into semiconductor materials sponsored by the National Science Foundation, which has already had to back down from an invitation offered to at least one Eastern European scientist because it found the terms of the visit imposed by the Commerce Department to be unacceptable.

"Unfortunately, these initiatives appear to be only the first of many such actions to follow," the five university presidents add ominously. And they continue:

"The ITAR and EAR regulations have existed for a number of years, and up to now have not been applied to traditional university activities. The new construction of these regulations appears to contemplate government restrictions of research publications and of discourse among scholars, as well as discrimination based on nationality in the employment of faculty and the admission of students and visiting scholars. In the broad scientific and technical areas defined in the regulations, faculty could not conduct classroom lectures when foreign students were present, engage in the exchange of information with foreign visitors, present papers or participate in discussions at symposia and conferences where foreign nationals were present, or publish research findings in the open literature. Nor could universities, in effect, admit foreign nationals to graduate studies in these areas. Such restrictions would conflict with the fundamental precepts that define the role and operation of this nation's universities."

The presidents say that the regulations could be interpreted to cover instruction and research which, although potentially useful in military applications, have much broader utility in such other areas as medical systems and communication equipment. "Such interpretations of the regulations, coupled with their severe criminal penalties, could have a very real and unintended chilling effect on legitimate academic exchange," they say, adding: "Restricting the free flow of information among scientists and engineers would alter fundamentally the system that produced the scientific and technological lead that the government is now trying to protect and leave us nothing to protect in the very near future. The way to protect that lead is to make sure that the country's best talent is encouraged to work in the relevant areas, not to try to build a wall around past discoveries."

A reply has already been received from Defense Secretary Weinberger, saying that the issues raised by the letter are being studied closely by the three government departments. However, the slow rate at which presidential nominees are being confirmed—in particular Ralph DeLauer, of TRW, who has been nominated as the new Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering—will inevitably mean some delay until the Administration decides how it wants to proceed in this area. In addition, pressures are increasing for tighter, rather than looser, export controls, and this is unlikely to help the university cause.—David Dickson

(The author is Washington news editor of the British journal *Nature*.)

Subscription Form

Science & Government Report
Northwest Station
Box 6226A
Washington, D.C. 20015

☐ Renew my subscription; ☐ Check enclosed

☐ Enter my subscription; ☐ Please bill

Institutional subscribers: one year, $118.50 ☐; two years, $198.50 ☐

Individual subscribers: (To home address, payment by personal check)
one year, $48.50 ☐; two years, $82.50 ☐

(Overseas airmail, $25.00 per year additional.)

Name _____

Address _____

_____ Zip _____

Academe Gets on Anti-Regulation Bandwagon

Universities and colleges have not been slow to turn the current anti-regulation mood in Washington to their advantage.

Last month, Vice President George Bush announced that a broad review of government regulations planned by the Administration would include an examination of guidelines imposed on universities to ensure the proper use of federal research funds. The Vice President's announcement came shortly after he held a meeting with a group of university and industrial leaders who presented him with a nine-point agenda for regulatory reform drawn up by the panel organized by the American Council of Education (ACE) and known as the Business/Higher Education Forum.

Near the top of the priority list for further action, according to ACE General Counsel Sheldon Steinbach, is the Office of Management and Budget's much-maligned Circular A-21, which sets out the rules universities are expected to observe in accounting for federal grants. Even though these rules were modified towards the end of the Carter Administration—partly as a result of the intervention of Frank Press, Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, and OMB has been experimenting with more flexible methods of implementation—university scientists continue to complain vociferously about the demands made on them, particularly over the detailed time-and-effort reporting requiring them to indicate how their time is divided between teaching, research, and other activities.

University presidents have missed few opportunities over the past few years to voice public complaints about the difficulties of coping with increasing federal regulations, which, according to economist Howard Bowen of the Claremont Graduate School, add an average of about $1 million a year to the administrative costs of each US campus. In the past, OMB officials have replied that their responsibility is merely to ensure that funds are spent in the way that Congress intended. But OMB's aggressive stance seems to be softening slightly as universities link their complaints to the broader campaign against government regulation that's been gathering momentum in the private sector over the past few years.

The most concrete manifestation of this alliance has been the ACE Forum, established late in 1978, bringing together 62 leading businessmen and educators. For universities, the link with the chief executives of companies has helped provide the political leverage which would have been more difficult to generate on their own. For the companies, the association with the universities has added an air of academic legitimacy to their own complaints about the government regulation.

The report presented to Vice President Bush repeated the calculation previously developed by Murray Weidenbaum—now Chairman of Mr. Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers—that complying with federal regulations costs business and consumers about $100 billion a year. Among its several recommendations, most of which have a familiar ring, are the proposals that:

- Careful study should be made of the relative benefits and risks attached to different regulatory alternatives before a particular line of action is selected; options that are "the least intrusive and burdensome" should be given priority.
- A thorough review should be conducted of all the existing regulations to discover which might be trimmed or scrapped completely.
- In general, any expansion of the regulatory powers of government should be considered as the exception rather than the rule. "A starting point assumption should be that such expansion is normally unwarranted, unwelcome and dangerous," says the policy statement which five members of the Forum, including Reverend Theodore Hesburgh, President of Notre Dame, and Robert Anderson, Chairman and Chief Executive of Rockwell International Corporation, presented to Bush.

Following the presentation, Bush wrote to J.W. Peltason, president of ACE, asking for "documentation of instances in which specific regulations could be changed in order to increase benefits or decrease costs." Bush named Weidenbaum as the Administration task force's chief contact with the academic community.

Perhaps revealingly, the ACE Forum's report is less a detailed critique of the impact of federal regulation on universities than a listing of the arguments for decreased federal control, whether of industry or of higher education institutions. The report states, for example, that:

"The most important of the regulations' effects is the growing and unwelcome degree to which government intrudes into the private sector, compromising the capacity for independent action in business, labor, academic institutions and elsewhere."

DoD Seeks Small, High-Tech Bids

August 31 is the deadling for proposals under the Defense Department's newly established Defense Small Business Advanced Technology Program, which is intended "to capitalize on the historic creative potential of small high-technology firms." For additional information: Hal C. Felsher, Director, Small Business and Economic Utilization Policy, The Pentagon, Room 2A 340, Washington, DC 20301; tel. (202) 697-9383.

A Timely Report on Late Science Academy

Yet another rich addition to the bulging annals of institutional lassitude has come forth in an introspective report wherein the National Academy of Sciences examines its notorious record for late reports.

Marked "Confidential, For Internal Discussion Only," the report, issued in January, states that as of September 1980, 14 per cent of 250 pending reports were "one year or more late," and 64 per cent were late "by at least one month." The problem, the report goes on, is a chronic one, for "The percentage of reports that are on time and one year or more late are essentially" unchanged since 1977, when the problem was last examined. At that time, the Academy was under informal notice from the White House science office to the effect that its unpunctuality might be an impediment to getting important study projects for the National Research Council (NRC), the Academy's "working" arm.

The author of the report on reports, Micah Naftalin, a senior Academy staff member, states in a covering letter to the Academy President Philip Handler, "You have often commented wryly that the apparent consistency of data trends on a variety of NRC functions seems to suggest the influence of some mystical force. It would seem that the 'force' also affects the rate and punctuality of our many autonomous units"—a reference to the outside consulting groups that conduct studies for the Academy under the administrative umbrella of the National Research Council.

Naftalin's letter states that the directors of the study groups responsible for the 35 reports that were at least one year late "in rating their respective study reports in terms of embarrassment to the Academy or the importance that sponsors attached to he report's lateness, ranked about one-third of the 35 as being of little or no concern to anyone save, in some cases, the authors. By contrast, 14 (40 per cent), including six of the still unissued reports, were rated as of moderate to extreme importance to one or more government bodies and a wider public."

The implications of this analysis are fascinating, because if there's "little or no concern" over a paid-for study that's at least a year overdue, then it is not unlikely that the US Government could just as well have got along without ordering the study.

Why are studies so often late? Naftalin concludes that the main reason is that they're undertaken without careful planning. Though this was evident in 1977, he points out, "The lack of adequate planning at the earliest stages of studies remains commonplace today."

Lots of good and timely work is produced by the NRC, he continues, but, "Having said this," he continues, it "is, nonetheless, my conviction that we have too many poorly planned and executed studies, and excessively late reports, a condition that becomes infectuous and demoralizing. . ."

The report on reports was discussed at a senior staff meeting on April 21—honored by the rare attendance of President Handler. And it was decided to tackle the problem by providing training for professional staff members and by holding executive directors of study groups responsible for planning and monitoring.

Up to the present, an NAS staff member told SGR, "No one has been responsible for anything."—DSG

Science & Government Report
Northwest Station
Box 6226A
Washington, D.C. 20015

Second class postage paid at Washington, D.C.

9999
Xerox-University Microfilms
300 N. Zeeb Rd
Ann Arbor MI 48106